

## FRANK BOWLING

Naima J. Keith, 'Decolonial Documents: Part Three', Frieze,  
5 November 2018



Frank Bowling, *Texas Louise*, 1971, (detail)

From Raqs Media Collective to Kapwani Kiwanga five respondents discuss the projects that have informed their thinking around decoloniality.

In the third of a series, timed with the specially-themed November-December issue of *frieze*, we asked five artists, curators and writers, whose work has been involved with the challenges of decolonizing culture, to discuss the projects that have informed their thinking – from exhibitions and publications to more intangible and transient networks, whose effects are often more felt than documented, though no less significant.

When *'Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power'* opened Tate Modern in 2017, I knew it would be a gamechanger. Including works by more than sixty African American artists spanning 1963 to the early 1980s, the ambitious exhibition gives important historical and critical perspective on a broad spectrum of revolutionary – and often overlooked – black artistic practice of the last fifty years. Curated by Mark Godfrey and Zoe Whitley, the show is organized by artistic approaches and affinities, creating links across geographical regions and decades. *'Soul of a Nation'* not only gives crucial context to artists such as Sam Gilliam and Barkley L. Hendricks (who only late in life have received the attention

their work merits), but also introduces lesser known names who likewise worked toward social change through their art. Other surprises include Frank Bowling, born in Guyana and generally viewed within the field of postcolonial British art: Bowling lived in New York from 1966 into the 1970s, where he was a contributing editor to *Arts* magazine and was mentored by the influential art critic Clement Greenberg, making him a pivotal figure in understanding the full narrative of gestural and colour field painting. *'Soul of a Nation'* aims at nothing less than transforming the canon of postwar American art as we know it – and, in the process, exposing its inherent racial biases. Long overdue, its effects will be far-reaching as it thankfully travels to several institutions across the US at a moment when amplifying the voices and political inroads of black creators could not be more necessary.